

Testimony of Linda Alderman  
in Support of  
Proposed House Bill 6628:  
AN ACT CONCERNING MEDICAID COVERAGE OF BIOMARKER TESTING  
Human Services Committee – February 14, 2023

Esteemed members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Linda Alderman and I have lived in West Hartford for over thirty years. I am a survivor of a rare disease, a two-time survivor of breast cancer, and am the Connecticut State Lead Volunteer for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. I am testifying in support of proposed House Bill 6628, An Act Concerning Medicaid Coverage of Biomarker Testing. I thank you for the opportunity.

I was devastated to see the pathology report after my double mastectomy in 2008, because it stated that my malignant tumor was 2.5 cm and I knew that any size over 2 cm meant that I would need chemotherapy. At that time, breast cancer treatment was based on size and/or grade, and the standard of care for the size of my tumor was a full course of chemo.

The prospect of receiving chemotherapy is terrifying for the reasons we all know - potential impact to organs, hair loss, anemia, sores, nausea, brain fog, and the list goes on and on. But I had another reason to be afraid of chemo, and that was because I was recovering from a rare disease, Cushing's Syndrome, that had caused significant cognitive impairment; I had been an environmental attorney for twenty years, but Cushing's had caused memory loss and impacted my speech and processing so profoundly that I had become disabled from the practice of law. I knew that I would probably never recover all of my lost brain function, but there was hope that I would recover some of it. My oncologists, however, confirmed my greatest fear about chemotherapy: If I received it, my cognitive impairment would most likely be permanent and I might not have any meaningful recovery. There was also the real possibility that chemotherapy could cause additional damage to my cognitive and processing functions.

But then my oncologist told me about a new biomarker test for breast cancer patients called the Oncotype DX that would be performed on my tumor's pathology and would tell us not only if my tumor would react to chemotherapy, but if chemotherapy would prevent recurrence. Instead of immediately being given a one size fits all chemo treatment, I was fortunate enough to receive a biomarker test that analyzed my specific tumor and determined the best course of treatment for it. Thankfully, the biomarker test results informed my oncologists that I had a very low risk of recurrence, that I would not benefit from chemotherapy, and that hormonal treatment in addition to the surgery I had already was the best course of treatment for me.

We currently have life changing tests that could lead to better health outcomes, increased quality of life and reduced costs that patients won't be able to receive because they can't afford it. Simply put, there are patients who could benefit from biomarker testing who don't have access to it because Medicaid won't cover the test they need, and people who receive Medicaid are the least likely group to be able to afford a biomarker test out of pocket. It seems counter

intuitive to me that Medicaid doesn't cover biomarker testing because it could lead to a significant cost savings. For example, in my case, the biomarker test not only saved my health insurer from the significant cost of chemotherapy, but also from all of the future health care I most likely would have needed to not only treat the typical side effects of chemotherapy, but also for the medical and behavioral care, as well as the occupational therapy and lifelong care I would have required if my cognitive function had been permanently and/or further impaired.

Proposed House Bill 6628 will not only open the door to treatment that can save lives, but could provide a significant cost savings to our state, like my biomarker testing provided a significant cost savings for my health insurer, and I hope that you will look favorably upon these sections of the proposed bill.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Linda Alderman

Connecticut State Lead, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

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